

My name is Nick Hornby. I'm an artist based in London, and I have been in conversation with Alfredo Cramerotti, the Director of MOSTYN for a couple of years now. We've been discussing images and sculpture, and he invited me to come and put together my first public institutional exhibition here in MOSTYN. I'm very excited to be showing you all.

The title of the exhibition is 'Zygotes and Confessions' and it's a deeply personal show for me. I've been making sculpture for ten years now and the work has been quite academic and quite serious; it's been quite austere.

Like everyone, this year has been difficult and the result of COVID lockdown has been a show which is deeply personal and autobiographical. So, there are three different types of objects in the show. There are, sort of, meta-cubist busts that are derived from 19th-century marble busts that are in the V&A, then there are these Victorian dogs sometimes called "mantelpiece dogs", and there are these globular objects that are partly inspired by early Parisian abstraction. We've tied them all together using this incredible process of, a sort of, liquefied photography. We print images onto this water-based substrate and then, incredibly carefully, place them onto the surface of water – at which point you can take the sculptures and push them through the surface of the water and the photograph wraps all the way around. It fits into all of the nooks and crannies and the water pulls all around it. It's a kind of extraordinary mixture of traditional marbling – the same thing you might have at the front of the book – and the filters and liquidity that we have now in Instagram.

The exhibition is deeply figurative, which feels appropriate at the moment. Touch. People. There's a lot of looking, and being looked at, so when you, the viewer walking around the space, hopefully, will feel like a participant, an outsider, and also someone who is contributing to all of the exchanges and dialogues across the objects. The objects have fronts and backs; they're sculptures, they're three-dimensional, and then they also have the image space of the photograph that's been applied to the object. As you, sort of, navigate the sculptures you can be looked at, you can be looking into the pictorial depth of the photo, you can be bounced back and reflected by this, sort of, high gloss lacquer.

So, the title of the exhibition is 'Zygotes and Confessions'. I've always been really intrigued by comparisons: binary opposition, theses and antitheses. In the real world [we're always..] we're frequently comparing things that are of like: 20% versus 80%. With art sometimes you're asked to question things that are harder to compare: how do you balance a meteorite with a Porsche? for example, and that's what this title is about for me; it's this category error. A zygote is a sort of a scientific term and it refers to a pre-sexualized embryo, a pre-embryo state of the life cycle of a human, and confessions – well that's... in this case, it's my story, my autobiography.

The series of pieces here are also engaging with relationships, people I've encountered – very personal relationships; it's an autobiographical show. So hopefully your experience of the pieces has a strange ahistorical feeling. On the one hand, the Victorian busts evoke the sort of the height of 1850, the blobs feel quite modernist, but then, hopefully, there's something quite uncanny about the sensibility of the image and the gloss. I think of these things as being almost like the manifestation of an iPhone screen. That liquid crystal display of the iPhone screen has become manifest through this liquefied image process, so the

protagonists of these objects are, literally, the protagonists that I speak to through my phone – that incredibly intimate thing that one does. There's also a lot of technology involved in this. The objects are designed in CAD, within a computer, then digitally fabricated, digitally cut, and there's some slippage between the digital realm and the analogue realm.

One of the things that artists think about – the conversation I've had with Alfredo – has been about history and how I have quite an ahistorical approach to things. I think it's possible to find a Renaissance sculpture as relevant today as the front cover of a newspaper. A similar thing happens in this exhibition where the busts, for example, are derived from Victorian marble busts in the Hintze Galleries in the V&A from around 1850 and 1880. The way I've re-assembled them, through a computer, the objects have this feeling of cubism – so 1920 – and then this final layer that I've added through the image shifts it right up to present-day: image-saturated social media, liquefied Instagram, deep fake, face-filtering situation; so hopefully you're looking and, simultaneously, seeing this flattening of history.

The starting point for the exhibition, actually, was a series of works I made with a photographer called Louie Banks. He's an incredible photographer. He's known for shooting a lot of high-end fashion and also the queer scene in London. He had shot some transsexual performers and we spoke about collaborating. Initially, I was going to be placing my busts in proximity to his photographs, and one thing led to another and this process of the liquefied images meant that we were able to, literally, hybridize those two things. If it wasn't for Corona[virus]... I wanted to stipulate that the sculptures could be touched. What's quite strange about these objects is they have this very smooth glossy surface, which I think feels quite luscious and begs to be touched, but then beneath the glossy surface are these very intimate images of fragments of body parts – sometimes in swimwear – so there comes this slight awkward moment where you want to touch the sculpture but you also might find yourself touching the body of the protagonist.

I like that uncomfortableness.